



Illini Mentor Program: Connecting to Community through Co-curricular Service-Learning

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

The Mission

Illini Mentor Program (IMP) is a registered student organization that is dedicated to fostering meaningful and consistent mentoring relationships between University students and children in the local community with the goal of supporting learning, growth, skill-building, and interracial and cultural understanding.

Through involvement in IMP, college students become more knowledgeable about the community and have opportunities to explore their strengths and build leadership skills as they take an active role in promoting positive youth development.

IMP's mission includes engaging students in the process of building bridges between the University of Illinois and the surrounding community, which can lead to productive and mutually beneficial dialogue, capacity-building, and a commitment to civic responsibility.



Our History

IMP developed out of a youth mentoring program that was the centerpiece of an academic service-learning course taught in the Department of Psychology in the Spring of 2004. Through student leadership and relationship-building in the community, IMP was created as a co-curricular service-learning organization that could provide structure and support to sustain an effective mentoring program. IMP initiated its pilot program at the Don Moyer Boys and Girls Club in the Spring of 2005. Today, IMP facilitates an active program in collaboration with two community partners.

Don Moyer Boys & Girls Club
Saturday Program
10:00 a.m.-12:00 noon
Open to ages 9-12

Stratton Elementary School
Tuesday & Wednesday Programs
3:30-5:30 p.m.
Open to 3rd-5th grades



Program Overview

Mentors and mentees commit to a full academic year of consistent participation in the program. Mentoring occurs once per week for two hours with a focus on building positive relationships between the children and young adults and learning from those experiences.

The sessions emphasize academic support and enrichment activities to help children build developmental assets that will help them to be healthy, successful, and responsible citizens. Activities cover topics such as culture and diversity, the arts, self-esteem, health and nutrition, organizational and communication skills, and service to the community.

IMP values strong communication between mentors and other caring adults in the children's lives. Social events are organized to help build trust and a sense of community with family members and to celebrate the children's accomplishments.

To ensure program quality, membership requires mentors to participate in bi-weekly training and reflection activities as well as 10 hours of service to the organization. The substantial number of indirect service hours that mentors and executive board members devote (i.e., committee work, executive board meetings, program development, fundraising, family and community events, and mentor recruitment, screening, and training) are invaluable for IMP's sustainability.



Recognition

IMP strives for excellence as a learning organization and is committed to best practices in mentoring and community engagement. IMP has been privileged to receive the following honors:

T.I.S Bookstore Outstanding Student Organization Award (2006)

Robert P. Larsen Human Development Award from the Counseling Center (2008)

Outstanding Service Award from the Office of Volunteer Programs (2008)